

Why do them?

You do not need to learn how to do flip turns if all you will ever do is swim in triathlons. But if you want to get into masters swimming, you will need to learn to do a proper flip turn. There is absolutely no point in doing a bad flip turn, which is what most recreational swimmers and many masters swimmers do. When a flip turn is done well, you approach the wall at swimming speed for the race or set you are doing. (In other words, you **do not** slow down or stop at the wall.) You execute a fast, tight and compact somersault, plant your feet on the wall, streamline and push off in a face-up position, rotating onto your side as you glide to the surface. If you are going to do flip turns, always do them right! Do not practice slow, lazy flip turns, or that is all you will be capable of doing.

Master Flip turns One Step at a Time

It's best to master the movements required for a good flip turn, one step at a time. Do not proceed to the next step until you are very comfortable with the current step.

Step 1: Learn to do a quick, compact somersault

Away from the wall, face down, arms at sides, kick very gently at the surface - just enough to keep from sinking. To perform the somersault: turn your palms down to face the bottom. Snap into a tuck position by kicking with both legs at once (Dolphin kick), using both your abs and your hands to get into a quick tuck, while pulling your knees into your chest. Grab hold of your knees to become as compact as possible as you complete the somersault.

Step 2: Swim to a quick, compact somersault

Get balanced at the surface. Swim three or four strokes to attain cruising speed. To begin the somersault, do not recover one arm – leave it at your side. When the other arm completes its stroke, perform the somersault as described above. With the momentum provided by stroking, if you hold to a tight tuck position, you *might* be able to perform two somersaults.

Step 3: Somersault to streamline on your back

Begin as above: get balanced, swim and somersault, but end the somersault by sliding into a streamlined position on your back. In this step, do not grab your knees. Instead, as you complete your somersault, extend your arms, lock hand over hand, squeezing your head between your shoulders, and extend your legs. You should be streamlined on your back at the surface, sliding forward feet first.

Step 4: Somersault to the wall

Same as above, but slide into the wall. Learn when to begin your turn. End with feet planted slightly wider than shoulder width, knees bent slightly, upper body streamlined, ready to push off in the other direction (but do not push off yet...)

Step 5: Streamline on back and push off from wall

Start by holding onto the wall. As slowly and deliberately as possible, drop backwards into a streamline position, carefully plant both feet and push straight out from the wall. Glide as far as you can, face up on the push-off, but rotating to your side as you glide to the surface.

Step 6: Balance, swim, somersault, streamline, push off

Combine steps 4 and 5 to do a complete flip turn. The first stroke (the pullout) is done with your bottom arm – it is a fast, light stroke to help with rotation (not a power stroke). Do not breathe until the second or third stroke.